

(1 Corinthians) ch.10:14-10:33

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the importance of fleeing from idolatry to maintain a true relationship with God and to understand the significance of our fellowship in Christ's sacrifice.

Duration: 44:13

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 10:12-14, 1 Corinthians 10:16

Topics: "Temptation", "Idolatry"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of temptation and how it can manifest in various forms in our lives. He emphasizes the importance of giving our whole heart to God and seeking His grace in times of need to overcome temptation. The preacher also highlights the significance of the cup and bread in the Lord's table, explaining that they represent a fellowship and sharing in the blood and body of Christ. He warns against idolatry, which can take the form of distractions such as music, even Christian music, that consumes our time and hinders our devotion to God. The sermon concludes with the exhortation to flee from idolatry and prioritize our relationship with God above all else.

Transcript

Let's turn today to 1 Corinthians and chapter 10 and verse 14. In the previous verses we were considering how the Israelites, though they had come out of Egypt, had not entered the promised land which was God's highest purpose for them. And then in that context he had said in verse 12, Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

And the example of the Israelites was given to warn self-confident Christians to be careful that they do not miss out on God's highest purpose just like those Israelites missed out on God's highest purpose. And it is true that as Christians we face trial and temptation, but in this context the apostle says in verse 13 that no trial or temptation has ever overtaken you which is not common to man and in which God will not give you grace to overcome. God will never allow you to be tempted beyond your ability.

And that's a word that we must bear in mind at all times in relation to trials that come into our life as well as temptation. Everything is weighed out by a loving father who ensures that it never becomes too much for us. And we need to understand verse 14 in the context of these preceding verses.

Therefore, and whenever we read in the scriptures the word therefore we have to link it to the verses immediately preceding and this is why it's been helpful to look at the previous verses. Therefore my

beloved flee from idolatry. Link that with verse 13 which says that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability but that does not mean that we have to do nothing on our part.

God will certainly make a way of escape as it says in verse 13 that we can overcome it or endure it as it says there but we also need to be careful that we don't put ourselves in the place of temptation unnecessarily. Even to a wholehearted disciple like Timothy Paul had to write in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 22 flee from youthful lusts and in 1 Timothy 6 verses 10 and 11 he says flee from the love of money you man of God. So there we see that the apostle Paul tells Timothy to flee from the love of money even though Timothy was such a wholehearted disciple who had already a great measure of freedom from the love of money.

But we can never say that we don't need to flee from the love of money until our attitude to money has become the attitude that Jesus had to money and none of us have reached there yet and therefore there is a need for that exhortation to flee from the love of money for Timothy as well as for all of us. Now why do I speak about money here? Because in Colossians chapter 3 we read that covetousness is idolatry. Colossians 3 verse 5 in the last part it says greed or covetousness or the desire to have or to possess what we do not have or possess already amounts to idolatry and we have just been looking at 1 Corinthians 10 verse 14 where it says flee from idolatry.

Putting these two verses together we could say that greed is a form of idolatry and therefore we are exhorted here to flee from greed. Flee from the desire to possess things which it has pleased God not to give you. We have to learn godliness with contentment with the things that God has provided for us.

Never compare our lot with somebody else's. Idolatry is not just bowing down to idols made of wood and stone but idolatry is giving anything the supreme place in our heart which God alone should have. The first commandment in the Old Testament was Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, strength and mind.

This is what Jesus himself referred to as the first commandment in Matthew 22. And when we love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind there is no more place in our heart for anything else or anyone else. If there is a little bit of love of money in our heart then we have to say that in that measure in our heart we do not love God.

We are called to love God with all of our hearts. And if in some corner of our hearts we have some attachment to a human being then again we do not love God with all of our hearts. We are to love even people through God.

In other words, with a divine love. And this is why our whole heart has to be given up to God. It is not enough that we have given up sins in our life but that we also give up the attachment to legitimate things that hinders the singleness of our devotion to God.

And so it says here, flee from idolatry. And there can be many forms of idolatry. Our job or our profession can be an idol.

And one evidence of that is that when we don't get a promotion we can be disturbed by it or depressed by it. Or if somebody who is junior to us gets promoted over us and we are depressed by that or disturbed by that that proves that our job was an idol in our life. And it is in such instances where we think we are free from idolatry that we discover how much idolatry still lies very much in us.

If anything in the world can disturb our peace, disturb our joy we can be sure that that thing is an idol. If something expensive in our home is broken or stolen or damaged and that disturbs us, we can be sure that that thing was an idol in our life. And it is a good thing that it was damaged or stolen so that we would stop being idolaters.

And that's why God allows many things to happen in the lives of wholehearted believers. They have problems in their job. Other people get promoted over them.

Their material things sometimes get damaged and destroyed. These are all ways and means by which God seeks to deliver us from all idolatry. Because when there is idolatry in our life it becomes very difficult to overcome temptation.

If you value some material thing in your home excessively then when that is damaged or dropped and broken by someone you can lose your temper. It's very difficult to overcome your temper at such a time. You can be very upset with a child for having broken something valuable in your home.

The problem there is not with your temper but with your idolatry of some material thing. If you had not idolized that material thing you wouldn't have had a problem with anger in that particular situation. And so we see God does not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability.

Verse 13 But he cannot help us if we do not obey the exhortation to flee from idolatry. The worship of the opposite sex is another form of idolatry. We saw that in 2 Timothy 2.22 that even a person like Timothy had to be exhorted to flee from youthful lusts.

Flee from those things that give young people bad thoughts. This is a very needed exhortation. Nothing must be great in our eyes except God himself, his kingdom, his will, his name.

These are the things that should concern us as Jesus taught us in the Lord's Prayer. Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done. Those must be uppermost in our mind.

And if those are not uppermost in our mind then we are idolaters. And it's good for all of us to examine ourselves to see whether there is any form of idolatry in any part of our life. Because this may be the reason why 1 Corinthians 10 verse 13 may not seem to be working in your life.

You may be wondering why certain temptations seem to trouble you and harass you so much. You need to go into verse 14 before you can experience the reality of verse 13. Because verse 14 says, therefore, which means since God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability, therefore, here is your part, flee from idolatry.

Do not worship anything which distracts you from your devotion to God. It can be music. It can be Christian music which plays such an important part in your life which takes so much of your time.

Maybe the practicing of some musical instrument. Maybe the singing in a choir that takes so much time that you do not have time for God, for His word and for prayer. This is happening with many people who imagine that they are serving the Lord in music.

But their music has become an idol. It is not worldly music. It is Christian music.

But their Christian music has become an idol. And the word of God to them is flee from idolatry. It can be a sport.

It can be a form of entertainment or something which though legitimate is yet taking so much place in our life. Something that is so important to us. And then we are constantly falling in temptation.

And therefore, we need to take verse 13 and 14 together if we are to experience how God does make a way of escape for us. We can have victory over every single temptation if we have given our whole heart to God, make sure there are no idols there, and seek for grace in the time of need. And God will make a way for us to escape so that we can overcome temptation and glorify His name.

Let's turn now to 1 Corinthians and chapter 10 and verse 15. First epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 10 and verse 15. I speak as to wise men, you judge what I say.

Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Here Paul is telling us that we are to think about what he is going to say as wise people. Look and see for yourself what I am about to tell you about whether it is right or not.

He says, think of it as wise men. And then he tells us about the cup and the bread we break at the Lord's table. And this is a very important verse, verse 16, because it tells us exactly what the cup and the bread are.

Now there are many who think that the cup is the blood of Christ and the bread is the body of Christ. But notice what it says in verse 16. The cup of blessing which we bless is a fellowship in the blood of Christ.

It is not the blood of Christ itself. It is a fellowship in the blood of Christ. And the bread which we break is a fellowship, a sharing together in the body of Christ.

And if only we would read Scripture carefully, we would be saved from many wrong teachings. We find here therefore that there is no mysterious way in which the wine in the cup becomes blood, no mysterious way in which the bread becomes the flesh of Jesus, as some people think. Quite the contrary.

It is a testimony to the fellowship we have in the body and the blood of Jesus Christ. And that also teaches us something very important, that we cannot take part in the bread and in the cup unless that fellowship which we have with the body and blood of Christ is a reality in our lives. We cannot testify about something which is not true in our lives.

We have to ensure that what we testify to publicly in the breaking of bread and in the drinking of the cup is a reality in our daily life. What then does it mean to have a fellowship in the body of Christ and in the blood of Christ? Jesus spoke in John chapter 6 and verse 54 He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life. And I will raise him up on the last day.

There again he spoke about an eating. And eating is one of the phrases in the New Testament that speaks of fellowship. A fellowship in his flesh and in his blood means a sharing in the death that he died.

This is the meaning of sharing in his body and blood. For his body was broken and his blood was poured out. Speaking of death.

And we could paraphrase 1 Corinthians 10, 16 that the Lord's table which we partake of is a fellowship a testimony to a fellowship in the dying of Jesus. What is this dying of Jesus? This is what the carnally minded baby Corinthians needed to know more than anything else. They had the gifts of the Spirit as we

saw in chapter 1. But they did not understand this sharing in the dying of Christ and that's why they never became mature.

For maturity comes not through the exercise of spiritual gifts but through a sharing in the dying of Jesus. It is not the death which Jesus died on Calvary's cross for we can have no fellowship with him there. There he died alone for the sins of the world.

And none of us have any part in that. But there was a dying that Jesus endured all through his earthly life. All through the 33 years he walked on this earth he died to himself.

He died to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. To all that is in the world he died. And Paul says in Galatians 6, 14 God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ whereby the world is crucified to me and I unto the world.

It is this testimony to a dying with Jesus that means that I want to go the same way. I desire with all of my heart to share in the dying of Jesus to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. To die to myself so that I can live for him.

This is what we testify to in the breaking of bread. And this is such an important testimony that if a person doesn't mean this he is really mocking the Lord's table. And then we can see how many Christians go meaninglessly to the Lord's table without understanding what they are testifying to over there.

One other aspect of the Lord's table is mentioned in verse 17. 1 Corinthians 10, verse 17 Since there is one bread we who are many are one body we all partake of the one bread. Here he speaks about the church as the body of Christ.

In verse 16 he was speaking about the physical body of Christ. Now he speaks about the church also which is called the body of Christ and he says there is symbolism in the fact that it is one bread that we break. Not a multitude of little wafers but one piece of bread for there is one body and it is that one bread that we break and that each of us partake from.

Thus we testify that though we are different members we are yet one body just like that little piece that we break off from that one bread is really part of one whole loaf. And so he says there is a testimony here not only concerning our taking up the cross and following Jesus along the way of the cross, the way of death to self, but also there is a testimony that we are in fellowship with one another in the body of Christ. And that is why a person who is not in fellowship with his brother or sister can never take part in the Lord's table worthily.

He cannot take part in the bread or the cup worthily if he is out of fellowship with any member in Christ's body. And so we see here since we all partake of the one bread we are one body. Do you see how important and serious a testimony it is to break bread? It's not just a meaningless ritual we are to go through once a week or once a month, but something that is to be an expression of a living reality.

Fellowship with the father and with his son Jesus Christ along the way of the cross. And fellowship with one another as members of the body of Christ. And this also involves my having to take up the cross, for it is impossible for two brothers or two sisters to have fellowship with each other unless each is willing to die to himself.

And this is the meaning of the breaking of bread and drinking the cup, that I am willing to die to myself, not only in my following Jesus along the way that he has opened for us to walk in, but also in my relationship with my brother and sister who is breaking bread here with me in this meeting. And so if we look at verse 16 and 17 carefully, we find the wealth of meaning there is in that simple testimony which the Lord instituted at the last supper. Verse 18.

Look at the nation Israel. Are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar? This is the same theme again. He says go back to the Old Testament.

What was it that the Israelites were testifying to when they laid their hands on the animal that was being slain? They were identifying with that animal. What about the priests who ate off the sacrifices that were placed on the altar? They were permitted to, in fact, commanded to by God. They were saying that they were sharers in the altar.

That is a beautiful phrase. Sharers in the altar. On that same altar on which the animal was slain, they were testifying that they were identifying with that, symbolic of the way in which we identify with Christ in being crucified with Him.

Sharers in Christ's altar, that is the cross, to be crucified with Him. And he says this is symbolized even in the Old Testament in the way the Israelites partook of the sacrifices that they put on the altar. Unfortunately, many Christians have considered only one aspect of Christ's sacrifice, and that is His dying on the cross for their sins.

Here He is speaking about that other aspect which is just as important. And that is that we are crucified with Christ. Our old man is crucified with Him.

It is thus that we are freed from sin. What do I mean then, He says in verse 19? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything? Or that an idol is anything? No. He says there is no such thing as an idol.

When I speak about fleeing from idolatry, it's not that these idols have any power. No. But He says the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons.

And here is a verse that teaches us that behind every idol there is a demon. A demon counterfeiting the truth. And this is why you find religious people deceived in this area.

When heathen people sacrifice to idols, it says here they are actually not just sacrificing to a block of wood or stone, but behind that block of wood or stone is a demon, is an evil spirit who is seeking to confuse them and to lead them astray. They are not really sacrificing to God. And He says I don't want you to become sharers in demons.

And that means every type of idolatry leads to a fellowship with evil spirits. And this is what we are to beware of. And so in the context of the Lord's Table, He says beware that there is no idolatry in your life when you come to the Lord's Table.

Let the Lord be supreme in every area of your life. And then we can take part in the Lord's Table worthily. Let's turn today to 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 19.

What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything? Or that an idol is anything? Paul says, am I saying that the idols to whom the heathen bring sacrifices are really alive and are real gods? No. Or

that the meat offered to an idol is really changed thereby? He's talking about meat offered to idols, food sacrificed to idols. Do you think I'm saying that it has some value? No, he says.

But what I want to clarify, he says in verse 20, is that every sacrifice offered to an idol is really being offered to an evil spirit. Don't think it is just a block of wood or stone. Behind those blocks of wood and stone are evil spirits.

Even if they are statues of so-called Christian saints and Christian personalities, behind those statues are evil spirits. And this is why it is so dangerous to have any type of image or idol, even supposedly of Christ, that we venerate or value. God gave a specific command forbidding our making any type of likeness of him.

We are not to make any likeness of God or of Christ, for no one has seen him. No one knows what he really looks like. It is an artist's imagination that paints a picture of Christ.

And that is not really the Christ at all. And it is dangerous and wrong and contrary to scripture to have such pictures in our homes, to have such statues, even of what is supposedly to be Christ in our homes. We must remember this verse which says that behind every idol is a demon.

And that in venerating an idol, a person comes into fellowship with evil spirits. This is such a dangerous thing. And this is why we need to steer clear of it completely.

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, verse 21, and the cup of demons. Paul says in the last part of verse 20, I don't want you to have fellowship with demons. Who wants to have fellowship with evil spirits? But you can have fellowship with evil spirits unconsciously.

That's the point of verse 20. Because the people who are offering these sacrifices and worshipping idols do not realize that they are coming into fellowship with evil spirits, but they are. And that affects their life and evil spirits get a power over them.

And he says then you can't come and take part in the Lord's table if you are partaking of the table of demons. There must be a clear break with idolatry and connection with evil spirits of every sort if we want to come to the Lord's table. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we trying to stir up God's anger? As another translation puts it, verse 22.

Are you trying to say that you're going to use your reason now and argue out and say, well I'm not really worshipping it, but it's just something there, put there to remind me of Christ and etc. The word of God says trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't lean to your own understanding. Your understanding will lead you astray.

When God has said something specifically, there is no need for us to justify our disobedience in any way for then we can stir up God's anger. And we are not stronger than Him, are we? It says in verse 22 No, then let us be careful let us fear to disobey even the smallest commandment in this area. Then in verse 23 Paul says All things are lawful but all things are not profitable.

And this is a principle that we must live by if we want to become spiritual Christians. We were considering in earlier studies that in the letter to the Corinthians we see some of the characteristics of a carnal Christian. For the Corinthians were carnal Christians.

And we see here that a carnal Christian is usually occupied with just what is right and what is wrong. And if I avoid all that is wrong and do all that is right, then I think I am spiritual. But this verse surprises us that a person can live at the level of avoiding wrong and doing right and still be a carnal Christian.

Because there are a lot of right things Paul says, which are not profitable. So we see that there are three levels at which we can live our life. The lowest level is where we do things unlawful and lawful.

But then we can rise to a higher level than that and give up unlawful things. And say now I am doing only the lawful things. I don't go to the cinemas, I don't drink, I don't dance, I don't gamble.

I've given up the unlawful things and I've come to the level of the lawful. But even that can leave me as a carnal, soulish Christian like the Corinthians were. To become a spiritual Christian I have to rise one step still higher.

And that is, from among the lawful things I still sift out those things which are unprofitable. And then I give up a number of lawful things as well because they are not profitable for Christian discipleship. They are not profitable to pursue after the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when one examines one's life in this light we see the reason why so many Christians live at a substandard level. Because they have not taken the pains to sift out from their lives that which is unprofitable. If you were to examine your life you may find that there are certain things which though lawful are not yet helping you to progress.

Consider for example the reading of novels. There is nothing unlawful about reading novels. If the novels are clean, of course if the novels are dirty that comes under the category of unlawful.

But if they are clean that's lawful. And yet a person can be so taken up with the reading of novels that he never becomes a spiritual Christian. We considered in our last study about music.

There is worldly music which leads people into the hands of evil spirits. That's unlawful. But there can be a preoccupation with lawful Christian music to such an extent that it drives out from your life time for that which is profitable.

And there you can say that Christian music though lawful has yet become unprofitable to you because it's gone beyond certain limits. And thus we could see the reason why Paul became a spiritual Christian was because he not only got rid of the unlawful things from his life but also the unprofitable. And here is where each of us decides whether we're going to remain carnal and soulish all our lives or whether we're going to be spiritual.

And one more thing he says in verse 23 is all things are lawful but not all things edify. He re-emphasizes that point that it's not just a matter of it being lawful but does it build up? In other words, is it constructive? Does it help in building up the church? Is it something that will encourage others? Is it something that will be a good example for other people to follow? Not just whether it's profitable for me spiritually that's one question. The second question is, is it something that will edify or build up the church and build up other people in the fellowship who are looking at my example? And so we see a truly spiritual Christian is one who lives by these two statements in verse 23.

He not only gets rid of the unlawful, but he examines the unlawful, but he examines even the lawful things in his life by a two-fold test. One, is it spiritually profitable for my life? Is it something that will draw me closer

to God, help me to follow Jesus better? And secondly, is this lawful thing something that will be a good example for others to follow when they see me doing it in my life? And if this action of his does not pass this two-fold test, he will give it up, even though it's a lawful thing. Now there are very few Christians who take their Christian life so seriously as to eliminate from their lives everything that does not pass this two-fold test.

And here lies the reason for so much carnality. And he goes on expanding on that point, saying in verse 24, let no one seek his own good alone, but also that of his neighbor. In other words, he says, it's not enough that I am being benefited by this.

That's not a good enough excuse, he says, for doing something. No, you also got to consider how your action is going to affect your neighbor. And you must not do anything that will hinder him.

He's talking about eating food, meat, sold in the meat market in those days. All meat was placed before idols before being brought into the market. But he says, concerning that, you can eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions, for conscience sake.

In other words, he says, when you go into the meat market, don't bother about asking them whether this has been placed before idols or not. Don't trouble your conscience unnecessarily with such questions. Just ignore that.

Just go ahead and buy it, because you know that an idol is nothing and a piece of food placed before an idol does not affect that food in any way. So he says, eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions. Because, verse 26, the earth is the Lord's and everything in it.

That means there is not a single thing in this earth which does not belong to the Lord, to our Lord, to our God and Father, ultimately. So even that meat which is offered, which has been placed before idols and which has been brought into the meat market, is something which ultimately belongs to our God and Father. So it doesn't disturb us where it was placed before it was sold in the meat market.

In the same way, he says, if one of the unbelievers invites you to a meal and puts a plate of food before you, without asking any questions, for conscience sake, eat what is set before you. Don't be disturbed by where was this food placed, etc. But he says, if the person says this is meat sacrificed to idols, then you must avoid it.

So that you don't become a stumbling block to him. And here is the principle, in the matter of food offered to idols, eat without asking questions. But when someone says this is food offered to idols, then avoid it, so that you show that you stand against that form of idolatry.

Let's turn today to 1 Corinthians, chapter 10, and verse 25. We were considering the subject of eating food that has been offered to idols. And in this connection, Paul gives us clear guidelines, saying that an idol is nothing.

He had already spoken about that in 1 Corinthians, chapter 8. That to us, there is no such thing as many gods or lords. We have only one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 8, verse 6. But he says, all men do not have this knowledge.

And in this context, he says, therefore, you can eat anything that is sold in the meat market, because it has not been defiled in any way, just because it has been placed in front of a block of wood or stone. And

if you don't ask any questions, you can eat it, because everything in the earth belongs to the Lord. And the same applies when you are invited to an unbeliever's house.

You do not have to be disturbed by whether the food that is set before you there has been placed before some block of wood or stone or not. Without asking any questions, you can eat, because your conscience is clear. But he says in verse 28, if someone there should say to you, this is food which has been sacrificed to idols, then you should not eat it.

The food itself is not changed in any way, but you do not want to be a stumbling block to that other person who has said that to you, the one who has informed you. And therefore he says in verse 29, for his conscience sake, avoid it. In other words, you need there to take a clear stand against idolatry.

And you need to make it clear to that other person's conscience that you do not believe in idols. And you do not believe in placing food before idols. And it is in order to take that stand before him, so that his conscience can be enlightened in this area, that you refuse to eat that food which has been set before idols when you have been informed about it.

But otherwise, you are perfectly free to eat. But you can ask, why is my freedom, verse 29, judged by another's conscience? You can ask, well, why should my freedom be decided upon according to the scruples of another person? Why should my personal freedom be limited? Can't I eat what I like? That is the question of a carnal Christian. A spiritual Christian does not, verse 24, does not seek only his own good, but also that of his neighbor.

He is concerned that his neighbor also be freed from wrong understanding of the true God. And therefore, in order to give light to another, we have to deny ourselves. That is the spirit of Christ.

He denied himself, even to the extent of giving up his life, in order that we might have light and life. And a spiritually minded Christian has the same attitude. But a carnally minded Christian can ask this question, verse 30.

If I partake with thankfulness, in other words, if I give thanks for what I'm eating, why should I be blamed for eating food over which I have given thanks? That is the question of a carnal Christian. That's how the Corinthians asked, and that indicated that they were carnal. But Paul says, if you are a spiritually minded Christian, you won't ask that question.

You won't be just thinking of your lust to eat that particular delicious meal that is set before you. You're willing to deny yourself the lust to eat that delicious meal, if it is going to be a stumbling block, and if it's going to be an opportunity for you to witness to another person. The same thing could be applied to alcoholic drinks.

That when a Christian refuses to touch alcoholic drinks, because alcoholic drinks ruin the body, it becomes an opportunity for a Christian to be a testimony in the presence of others who take alcoholic drinks. When a Christian refuses to serve alcoholic drinks, even to others, even if he doesn't partake of it himself, he becomes a testimony that I neither drink, nor do I offer alcoholic drinks to another. Because I do not want to ruin my body, neither do I want to ruin another's.

I will have nothing to do with these things. And that becomes an opportunity for a testimony to another. But if we are carnal, we will not be bothered about that.

We will only be bothered about ourselves, and not offending people, and we will be bothered about what other people think of us. But if we are spiritually minded, our attitude will be as described in verse 31. Whether I eat or drink, or whatever I do, I want to do all to the glory of God.

That is the attitude of a spiritually minded Christian. There are many things about which the Bible gives us no directions. There are many matters on which the scriptures are very plain and clear concerning what we are to do.

When it comes to speaking the truth, the word of Jesus is clear, let your yes be yes and your no, no. When it comes to our attitude to our enemies, it's clear that we are to love all of them. To those who curse us, our attitude must be we are to bless them.

In such matters, the attitude is clear. Anyone who has harmed us in any way, we are to forgive them and bless them. But in a number of matters, the word of God lays down no clear guideline, and there are 101 decisions we may have to take in life on matters concerning which there is no clear word commanding do this or do that in scripture.

In such matters, how do we arrive at a decision? And this is a very important principle for all of us who are Christians who are earnestly interested in being spiritually minded Christians to know this principle. God has given us the Holy Spirit to replace all the Old Testament laws. In the Old Testament there were detailed instructions concerning many, many aspects of daily life.

But in the New Testament all those detailed instructions have been replaced by the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is God's guide now in our hearts. And the Holy Spirit will give us freedom or peace concerning a certain matter, or give us an inner shrinking, a hesitation concerning a certain matter.

And this is how we know whether something is of God or something is merely our own choice. But, at the same time, we cannot sense accurately that prompting of the Holy Spirit this way or that way unless our mind is first of all fixed on seeking the glory of God in all matters. Because if I'm seeking my own gain the prompting I may feel within myself may be from my own flesh.

And I may think it is the Holy Spirit and I may be deceived. So it's important that my motive is right if I want to sense the prompting of the Holy Spirit in my heart correctly. And this is why verse 31 is a very important principle concerning all things that we do in our life about which there are no clear guidelines in Scripture.

Even down to the simple matter of eating and drinking. Eating and drinking food offered to idols in this particular case. Or all eating and drinking, generally speaking, in every matter.

And then he says this all-inclusive phrase in the middle of verse 31 Whatever you do. That means every single thing that we do in our life must be on this principle that I do it for the glory of God. Not for my own pleasure.

Not for my own satisfaction. I can eat and drink because I get pleasure from it. That's alright for a carnal Christian but not for a spiritual one.

A spiritual Christian eats and drinks for the glory of God. Everything he does is for the glory of God. He spends his money for the glory of God.

He lives for the glory of God. Everything he does is for the glory of God. And therefore he is very careful in every step he takes in life to ensure that he is not seeking his own profit or his own gain but the glory of God in all that he does.

Consider for example this phrase verse 26 The earth is the Lord's and everything that is in it. That applies to all our money for example. Did you know that all your money belongs to the Lord? It comes under the category of everything that is in the earth.

All the material possessions you own, your vehicles, your house, your lands, your property every single thing. It says in 1 Corinthians 10.26 that it belongs to the Lord. That's why the Lord doesn't allow us to take it with us when we leave this world and go into the grave.

We came naked, we have to go out naked. Why? Because everything in the earth belongs to the Lord. He may have given it to us on a loan for a period of time but when the time comes for us to leave the world he takes it away.

And then how are we to use our money and material things? The principle is verse 31 For the glory of God everything I have and every pie of money I possess must be kept and used for the glory of God. One who seeks to live by this principle will be a spiritual Christian. One who considers the questions mentioned in verse 23.

Is this a profitable way in which I'm spending my money? Is this a way in which you'll edify others? Is this a way in which God will be glorified? Eating, drinking, everything. Consider others. Verse 32 Give no offense.

As far as possible we should give no offense to others in the way we live. Jews or Greeks or believers. It makes no difference who they are.

Seek to live your life in such a way that you don't offend other people by your way of life. If the word of God offends them that's another thing. But you must not offend them by your way of life.

And he says consider my example. I please all men in all things. He doesn't compromise the scriptures.

No, that would be make Paul a compromiser. But he says I don't seek my own profit. My whole aim in life is that other people might be saved.

Verse 33. Because this is the greatest thing for the glory of God. And I'm willing to deny myself everything in order that other people might be saved.

For this was the spirit of Christ who gave up his life for our salvation. And Paul was gripped by that same spirit. And so he was willing to deny himself everything for the glory of God.

Verse 31. And for the salvation of others. Verse 33.

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