SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · LIVING IN THE LIGHT



DEEP DIVE

1 Corinthians

Chapter Ten, Verses 1–33

From the Wilderness to the Lord's Table — Israel's graves, God's faithfulness, two tables, and one rule for all of life

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Paul walks a church that trusted its baptism and its communion back into the wilderness, where a baptized, fed and watered people fell — then promises God's faithfulness in every temptation, sets the Lord's table against the table of demons, and ends at an ordinary dinner with the widest command in the letter. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Paul's key words.

THE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 10:1–33

wilderness · warning · table · liberty · glory

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Five movements from the cloud and the sea to "do all to the glory of God"

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"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall." — 1 Corinthians 10:12

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 10:1–33

From the Wilderness to the Lord's Table — Every privilege and most of them fell — so take heed, take heart, flee, and do all to the glory of God

† How to Read This Study

This study walks 1 Corinthians 10 in 5 movements, in Paul's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the argument so you can see where Paul is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word
R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle
MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED
△ God — His character & actions
Command / instruction
Key repeated word
Sin / warning
☆ Promise / blessing
Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and △ God is faithful, who ☆ will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation ☆ will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it."

† Before the Passage

Chapter 10 finishes an argument that began in chapter 8. The Corinthians had written to Paul about "things sacrificed to idols" (8:1). In a Greek city much of the meat passed through a temple before it reached a table, and social life ran through those temples — guild dinners, family celebrations, civic feasts. The "strong" said, rightly, that "there is no such thing as an idol in the world" (8:4), and concluded they could eat anywhere. Paul agreed with their theology and disagreed with their conclusion. In chapter 8 he answered with love for the weaker brother; in chapter 9 with his own example of giving up rights, and of disciplining himself "so that … I myself will not be disqualified" (9:27). Chapter 10 picks up that last word and turns it into a warning.

The warning comes from Israel — whom Paul calls, to a largely Gentile church, "our fathers." Every one of them was under the cloud, through the sea, fed with manna and given water from the rock (Exodus 13–17), and most of them died in the wilderness (Numbers 14:29). The Corinthians had their own "all": all baptized, all at the Lord's table. Paul lays the wilderness graves beside those privileges, names five sins from Exodus and Numbers, and then — because a frightened church needs to know it can stand — promises that God is faithful in every temptation (v. 13).

Only then does he answer the temple question directly. Every sacred meal is a sharing: the cup and the bread are a sharing in Christ (v. 16), Israel's worshipers shared in the altar (v. 18), and the idol's feast is a sharing with demons (v. 20). Paul's Old Testament root here is the Song of Moses: "They sacrificed to demons who were not God" (Deuteronomy 32:17) and "They have made Me jealous with what is not God" (32:21). The same song calls God "the Rock" (32:4) — the word behind verse 4.

Last, he returns to the market and the dinner party, where freedom is real but answerable to love (vv. 23–30), and he lifts the whole three-chapter debate to one rule: "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (v. 31). The next verse, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (11:1), closes the argument. Read the chapter as a road: take heed, because you can fall; take heart, because God is faithful; flee every table but His; then eat, drink and live for His glory and your neighbor's good.

I
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1–5

All of Them — Nevertheless

Every privilege Israel had, and most of them fell

> [1] *For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea;* [2] *and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;* [3] *and all ate the same spiritual food;* [4] *and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.* [5] *Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 10:1–5

FIGURE · ALL OF THEM — NEVERTHELESS

FIVE PRIVILEGES · vv1–4		FIVE SINS · vv6–10
all under the cloud Exod 13:21 — God's presence	**"ALL"** five times	**craved evil things (v6)** Num 11 — meat, not manna
all through the sea Exod 14:22 — on dry land	↓	**idolaters (v7)** Exod 32 — the golden calf
all baptized into Moses joined to their leader	**NEVERTHELESS** "most of them" laid low in the wilderness (v5)	**acted immorally (v8)** Num 25 — Peor; 23,000 fell
all ate spiritual food Exod 16:15 — the manna	↓	**tried the Lord (v9)** Num 21 — the serpents
all drank spiritual drink Exod 17:6 — "the rock was Christ"	"as some of them"	**grumbled (v10)** Num 14; 16 — the destroyer

WRITTEN FOR OUR INSTRUCTION (v11)

Baptized and fed is not the same as kept — "let him who thinks he stands take heed" (v12).

Read across: five blessings every Israelite shared, the one word that turns the story, and five sins Paul names from Exodus and Numbers — each "written for our instruction."

πνευματικὸν … πέτρα

PNEUMATIKON … PETRA · "SPIRITUAL … ROCK" · G4152, G4073

Pneumatikos appears three times in two verses — spiritual food, spiritual drink, a spiritual rock. The manna and the water were real, but supernatural in source and pointing beyond themselves (John 6:35). *Petra* is a rock mass, a cliff: the rock struck at Horeb (Exodus 17:6) and at Kadesh (Numbers 20:11). The rock "followed" them (*akoloutheō*, G190), and the verb for their drinking is imperfect — "they were drinking," a continual supply. Then: "the rock *was* Christ" (*ēn*) — not "is a picture of" but "was." The Song of Moses, which Paul quotes later in this chapter, calls God "the Rock" (Deuteronomy 32:4); Paul names that Rock as the Son, present with Israel before His incarnation.

ἐβαπτίσαντο εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν

EBAPTISANTO EIS TON MŌUSĒN · "WERE BAPTIZED INTO MOSES" · G907

The SBLGNT, Westcott-Hort and the Textus Receptus all read the middle *ebaptisanto*, "had themselves baptized"; some manuscripts (followed by Tischendorf) read the passive *ebaptisthēsan*. "Into Moses" is coined on Paul's "baptized into Christ" (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27): joined to a leader and his covenant. Israel crossed on dry ground; the "baptism" was the cloud above and the walls of water around — identification, not a ritual. That is the point: a real sign of belonging, and still no guarantee for a heart that turns away.

κατεστρώθησαν

KATESTRŌTHĒSAN · "THEY WERE LAID LOW" · G2693

From *katastrōnnymi*, "to strew down, lay flat" — used only here in the New Testament (KJV "overthrown"). Bodies scattered across the desert floor: Numbers 14:29, "your corpses will fall in this wilderness." The verb before it is *eudokēsen* (G2106), "was well-pleased" — the word of the Father's voice at the Jordan, "in whom I am well-pleased" (Matthew 3:17). With the baptized Son, God was well-pleased; with most of baptized Israel He was not. "Most" (*tois pleiosin*) is an understatement: of the adult generation, only Caleb and Joshua entered the land.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads chapter 10 as the continuation of chapters 8–9: Paul has just warned that a man can be "disqualified" (9:27), and now he illustrates it from Israel. He counts the blessings — the cloud of Shekinah glory, the sea, the manna and the water — and notes that "Israel even had ancient versions of the two Christian sacraments we receive to this day: baptism and communion." Paul builds on a rabbinic tradition of a rock that followed Israel, but either way the point stands: "Jesus Christ was present with Israel in the wilderness." Then the understatement — "Most indeed!" — since only Joshua and Caleb of that adult generation entered the land. The Corinthians thought they were "safe" because of past blessings; Israel was blessed and still perished.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

Sproul did not preach 1 Corinthians 10, but in his sermon on Romans 5:20–6:4 ("Dead to Sin, Alive to God," April 2006) he says what baptism is and is not — the very issue behind "baptized into Moses." "Baptism is a sign of our identification with Christ." It is "the sign of God's promise," and "It does not effect regeneration, but it is a sign of it." So he warns, "That does not mean that because we are baptized, we are automatically saved." Israel was identified with Moses in the cloud and the sea, and most of them still fell. Sproul's line between the sign and the thing signified is the line Paul draws with the word "nevertheless."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In the exposition of this chapter collected under his name at SermonIndex, Spurgeon reads the exodus as a picture of the visible church. Crossing "in the cloud and in the sea" marked Israel as God's separated people: "Then they all shared in the same spiritual ordinances," and the Rock that followed them was Christ. Yet "They were not all God's people. They were so nominally, and visibly; but they were not all really so." He sets the mixed multitude that left Egypt beside the unconverted who sit in churches today. His warning is not against the ordinances but against resting in them.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry opens with a sentence that could stand over the whole chapter: "Judaism was Christianity under a veil, wrapt up in types and dark hints." Israel's privileges "in the main, were the same with ours." The Red Sea "was a lane to them, but a grave to these"; baptized unto Moses, they were "brought under obligation to Moses's law and covenant"; the manna was a type of Christ crucified, and "this rock was Christ, that is, in type and figure." Yet many were overthrown in the wilderness: "Men may enjoy many and great spiritual privileges in this world, and yet come short of eternal life." Let none presume on privilege or profession, "except the root of the matter be in us."

II
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 10:6–13

Written for Our Instruction

Five sins, one warning, one promise

> 6 *Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.* 7 *Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY."* 8 *Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day.* 9 *Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents.* 10 *Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.* 11 *Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.* 12 *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.* 13 *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 10:6–13

> *"So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."*
>
> EXODUS 32:6

FIGURE · THE WAY OF ESCAPE

FOUR TRUTHS IN ONE VERSE · 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

COMMON TO MAN	GOD IS FAITHFUL	NOT BEYOND	THE WAY OF ESCAPE
anthrōpinos · G442	*pistos · G4103*	*He sets the limit*	*ekbasis · G1545*
nothing I face is unique to me	rests on His character, not mine	what you are able — as you rely on Him	a way out, provided with the temptation

"so that you will be able to endure it" — *hypopherō* (G5297), to bear up under

v14 · "THEREFORE … FLEE FROM IDOLATRY." The first way out Paul names is the door.

Verse 13 rests four comforts on God's faithfulness; the way out leads not around temptation but to the strength to bear it — and verse 14 names the first door.

τύποι … τυπικῶς · νουθεσία

TYPOI … TYPIKŌS · NOUTHESIA · "EXAMPLES … AS AN EXAMPLE · INSTRUCTION" · G5179, G3559

Typos is the mark left by a blow, then an impression, a pattern, a model. Verse 6 has the noun ("examples for us"); verse 11 the adverb *typikōs*, found only here in the New Testament (the Textus Receptus reads *typoi* again). Israel's history is a pattern stamped for the church to read. It was written for our *nouthesia* — literally a "putting in mind" (*nous* + *tithēmi*), instruction that warns; only three times in the New Testament (here; Ephesians 6:4; Titus 3:10). "The ends of the ages" (*ta telē tōn aiōnōn*, G5056, G165): the church lives where the ages meet their goal.

πειρασμὸς … ἀνθρώπινος

PEIRASMOS … ANTHRŌPINOS · "TEMPTATION … COMMON TO MAN" · G3986, G442

Peirasmos is a test, trial or temptation; context decides, and here it is the pressure that lures toward sin. "Has overtaken" is *eilēphen* (from *lambanō*, G2983), perfect tense — "has seized you." *Anthrōpinos* means "human," what belongs to people as people: no temptation is unique to me. Against that stands *pistos ho theos*, "faithful is God" (G4103), the same confession as 1:9. Verse 9's "try" is *ekpeirazō* (G1598), "test out, put to the proof" — the word Jesus used in His wilderness temptation: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" (Matthew 4:7; Luke 4:12). Where Israel failed in the desert, Christ stood.

ἔκβασις · ὑπενεγκεῖν

EKBASIS · HYPENENKEIN · "THE WAY OF ESCAPE · TO ENDURE" · G1545, G5297

Ekbasis is a way out, an exit; Hebrews 13:7 uses it for "the result" of a life. Paul writes it with the article — *the* way out, given "with the temptation," as one package. William Barclay (quoted by Guzik) pictures a mountain pass opening to a surrounded army. But the purpose clause matters: "so that you will be able *hypenenkein*" — from *hypopherō*, to carry from underneath, to bear up under a load (also 2 Timothy 3:11; 1 Peter 2:19). The way of escape is often not around the trial but through it, upright.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik walks the five sins and finds one root: Israel "could not say 'no' to their desires," and the Corinthians who insisted on their meat "just couldn't say 'no.'" He treats the 23,000 as a real difficulty (Exodus 32:28; Numbers 25:9) and quotes Hodge on how small such "apparitions of inaccuracy" are. On verse 12 he compares temptation to rocks in a harbor that Satan hides under a high tide. On verse 13: our temptation is not unique; God "has promised to supervise all temptation"; and the way of escape — Barclay's mountain pass — "isn't necessarily an easy way." It does not take us out of temptation; it leads "to the place where we may be able to bear it."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

Sproul has no sermon on these verses, but he preached the same warning from Romans 11, where Paul tells Gentile believers that Israel fell and they stand only by faith. His paraphrase of Paul there ("Israel's Rejection Not Final," December 2006) could stand over verse 12: "Be careful. Do not become haughty. Just as apostasy polluted Israel, it can pollute you." He voices the attitude Paul attacks — "But we have accepted the promises, so now we're God's chosen people" — and answers with Paul: "Do not be haughty, but fear." On Romans 15:4, the twin of our verse 11, he says, "I know of nothing more comforting to the soul than the Word of God": its warnings are written so that we might have hope.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached verse 12 at Exeter Hall in May 1855 (“A Caution to the Presumptuous,” No. 22). Presumption counterfeits assurance; it grows from prosperity, light thoughts of sin, ignorance of one’s own heart, and pride — men who “think they shall not fall because of their privileges.” “The man who thinks he is strong, is off his guard.” And: “The true Christian cannot possibly suffer a final fall, but he is very much disposed to a foul fall.” On verse 13 (“Comfort for the Tempted,” No. 2603) he consoles: “there is no sin in being tempted”; “The sin is that of the tempter, not of the tempted.” God is “master of the situation,” and “the right way is always of God’s making.”

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry calls Israel’s recorded sins “a standing monitor to the church,” and he begins where Paul begins, with desire: “carnal appetites indulged are the root and source of much sin,” and they “should be observed and checked in their first rise.” On verse 12: “we are most likely to fall when we are most confident of our own strength”; “Distrust of himself … is the Christian’s best security against all sin.” Then comfort, for “Though it is displeasing to God for us to presume, it is not pleasing to him for us to despair.” “The trials of common Christians are but common trials.” “Though Satan be a deceiver, God is true.” And “There is no valley so dark but he can find a way through it.”

III
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 10:14–22

Flee From Idolatry — One Table

The cup of the Lord and the cup of demons

14 *Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.* 15 *I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say.* 16 *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?* 17 *Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.* 18 *Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?* 19 *What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?* 20 *No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.* 21 *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.* 22 *Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?*

1 CORINTHIANS 10:14–22

“They sacrificed to demons who were not God, To gods whom they have not known, New gods who came lately, Whom your fathers did not dread.”

DEUTERONOMY 32:17

FIGURE · THREE TABLES

EVERY SACRED TABLE IS A SHARING · 1 CORINTHIANS 10:16–21

THE LORD'S TABLE vv16–17	ISRAEL'S ALTAR v18 · Lev 7:15	THE TABLE OF DEMONS vv19–21
the cup of blessing the bread we break a sharing (koinōnia) in Christ's blood and body one bread → one body	those who eat the sacrifices are sharers (koinōnoi) in the altar — joined to its God	the idol is nothing (v19) but the sacrifice goes to demons (v20; Deut 32:17) — eaters become sharers in demons

"You cannot … you cannot" (v21)
Not "you should not": the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons exclude each other.

"Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?" (v22)
The Song of Moses again (Deut 32:21) — and "We are not stronger than He, are we?"

The same word family (koinōnia, koinōnos) runs across all three tables: whatever table you eat at in worship, you share in the one it belongs to.

κοινωνία … κοινωνοί

KOINŌNIA … KOINŌNOI · "A SHARING … SHARERS" · G2842, G2844

Koinōnia is participation, a common share — "fellowship" in 1:9. Verse 16 uses it twice (KJV "communion"): the cup and the bread are a sharing in Christ's blood and body. Verse 18 uses the person-noun *koinōnoi*: Israel's eaters are "sharers in the altar"; verse 20 the same word: "sharers in demons." One word family across three tables is Paul's whole argument. A second verb, *metechō* (G3348), "partake, have a share," runs through verses 17, 21 and 30. The table (*trapeza*, G5132) of the Lord and the table of demons were familiar phrases: pagan invitations named "the table" of a god.

τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας · ἄρτος

TO POTĒRION TĒS EULOGIAS · ARTOS · "THE CUP OF BLESSING · BREAD" · G4221, G2129, G740

Eulogia is "speaking well of" — blessing, thanksgiving. "The cup of blessing" was the Jewish name for the cup over which thanks was said at a meal; Guzik identifies it with the Passover cup Jesus took and called "the new covenant in My blood" (Luke 22:20). "Which we bless" (*eulogoumen*) means we give thanks over it. *Artos* is a loaf: "one bread … one body … the one bread" (v. 17). Eating from one loaf shows and seals the unity of the church (12:13).

δαιμόνια · παραζηλοῦμεν

DAIMONIA · PARAZĒLOUMEN · "DEMONS · PROVOKE TO JEALOUSY" · G1140, G3863

Verse 20 echoes the Greek Old Testament of Deuteronomy 32:17 — they sacrificed "to demons and not to God." *Daimonion* appears four times in verses 20–21. The idol is nothing (8:4; 10:19), but worship does not go to nothing. Verse 22's *parazēloō*, "to stir to jealousy," appears only four times in the New Testament (Romans 10:19; 11:11, 14; here), and every one echoes the same Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:21). The command of verse 14 is *pheugete* (G5343), present imperative — "keep running" — the same verb as "Flee immorality" (6:18).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that verse 14 has the article — literally "the idolatry": Paul means the pagan temple feasts. "The word partakers is the same word (koinonia) for communion" in verse 16 and fellowship in verse 20; "To eat at a pagan temple banquet was to have fellowship at the altar of idols." An idol is nothing, but "demonic spirits take advantage of idol worship." He quotes an ancient invitation — "Chairemon invites you to a meal at the table of the lord Serapis" — and declines to read the Mass into the passage: "The emphasis and the similarity regard the meal, not the sacrifice." Good intentions do not protect; a man who puts his hand into the fire "is burned just the same."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

Sproul's sermon on Romans 1:18–25 ("God's Wrath," October 2005) explains why Paul treats idolatry so seriously: "The most fundamental, foundational sin in our fallen corrupt nature is the sin of idolatry." Fallen people exchange the glory of the incorruptible God for an image and serve the creature rather than the Creator; they want to "turn Him into a God made in our image, a God we can live with." And "When fallen creatures make idols, they do not make holy ones." Sproul does not speak of demons in that sermon — Paul adds that dimension in verse 20 — but his diagnosis explains why Paul says "flee" and not "be careful": idolatry is the native bent of the fallen heart, not a pagan curiosity.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon gave a communion address on verses 16–17 at Mentone ("Communion with Christ and his People," in *Till He Come*). "Union lies at the basis of communion": "We must be one with Christ in heart, and soul, and life." Reading the Revised Version's "loaf," he says, "The word 'loaf' helps to bring out more clearly the idea of unity." He refuses any magic in it: "Superstition has produced a sacrament where Jesus intended a fellowship." The table binds believers to one another — "Christians are one in Christ." And in his exposition of verses 20–21 he draws Paul's line: "We cannot have any delight in idol-worship, and yet worship the Christ of God."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry hears Paul appeal to their reason — "It is no dishonour to an inspired teacher … to appeal for the truth of it to the reason and consciences of his hearers." The Supper is "an instrument of communion with God"; "to partake of the Lord's table is to profess ourselves his guests and covenant people," together with all true Christians. As Israel's eaters were partakers of the altar, so feasting on idol sacrifices "was having fellowship with devils." The two cannot be held together: "Communion with Christ, and communion with devils, could never be had at once." "God cannot endure a rival in matter of worship," and the last question answers itself: "Are we a match for God?"

IV
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 10:23–30

Lawful, but Not Profitable

Freedom at the market and the dinner table, measured by love

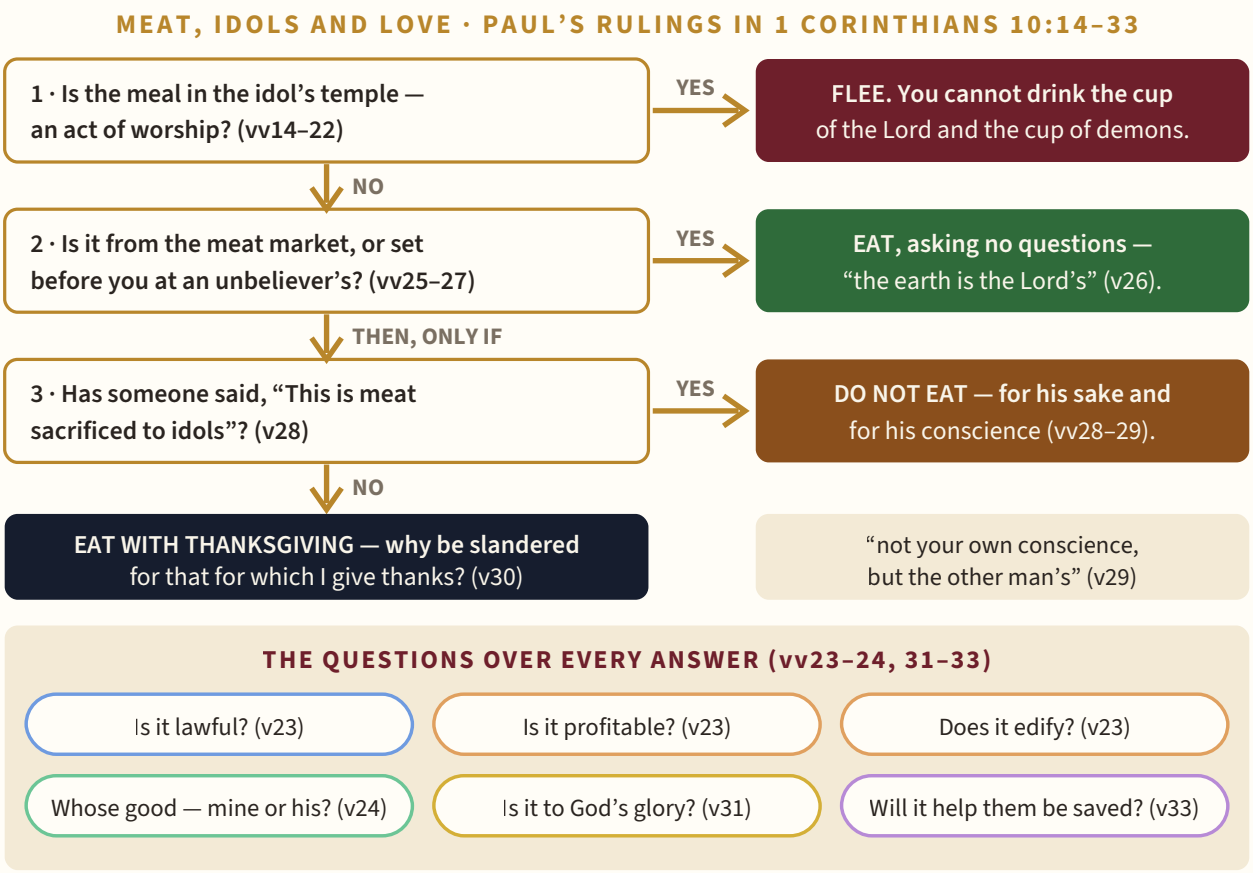
23 *All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.* 24 *Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.* 25 *Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake;* 26 *FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS.* 27 *If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake.* 28 *But if anyone says to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake;* 29 *I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?* 30 *If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?*

1 CORINTHIANS 10:23–30

"The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it."

PSALM 24:1

FIGURE · PAUL'S RULINGS ON IDOL MEAT



Follow the questions down: the temple is always no, the market and the friend's table are yes, and someone else's conscience can turn yes into not now — with love and God's glory over every answer.

συμφέρει … οἰκοδομεῖ

SYMPHEREI … OIKODOMEI · "IS PROFITABLE … EDIFIES" · G4851, G3618

Sympherō is "to bring together," then "to be of benefit, to help." Lawful is the first question, not the last; the next is, does it help — and whom? Verse 33 uses the same root: *to sympheron*, "the profit of the many." *Oikodomeō* is "to build a house" — the word of 8:1, "Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies." "All things are lawful" is a Corinthian slogan Paul has already answered once (6:12). The KJV's "for me" here follows the Textus Receptus; the SBLGNT, like the NASB, lacks it.

συνείδησις · ἀνακρίνοντες

SYNEIDĒSIS · ANAKRINONTES · "CONSCIENCE · ASKING QUESTIONS" · G4893, G350

Syneidēsis, "co-knowledge," is the inner witness that judges a man's own actions — five times in vv. 25–29, picking up 8:7, 10, 12. "Without asking questions" is *mēden anakrinontes*: not investigating, not putting the butcher on trial — the verb Paul used of judging in 2:14–15 and 4:3–4. Verse 29 draws the line: the conscience to be spared is "the other man's." My freedom (*eleutheria*, G1657) before God is not judged by his conscience, but I will limit its use for his good.

μάκελλον

MAKELLON · "MEAT MARKET" · G3111

A Latin loanword (*macellum*), used only here in the New Testament — fitting in Corinth, a Roman colony. Meat from temple sacrifices was regularly sold there; Henry notes that "the priest's share of heathen sacrifices" was often offered for sale. Paul's permission rests on Psalm 24:1 — "THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS" (v. 26) — which Guzik notes "was used as a Jewish blessing at mealtimes." Verse 30's "with thankfulness" is *chariti* (G5485), "by grace," and "slandered" is *blasphēmoumai* (G987).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik hears the Corinthians asking only "What's the harm to me?" when they should also ask "What good can this be for me?" — and how it touches others. "Just because something is permitted does not mean it is beneficial"; they "wanted to know how much they could get away with and still be Christians." Then the freedom: market meat "isn't 'infected by demons'"; the danger of verses 15–22 was the temple's "atmosphere of fellowship with demons." "The cow belonged to the Lord when it was on the hoof, and it belongs to the Lord now that it is on the barbecue!" But when someone at the table points to the idol, do not eat. Paul is consistent on one principle: "liberty within the limits of love."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

Sproul preached the parallel passage, Romans 14, in May 2007, and two of those sermons speak straight to this paragraph. He describes Christians who, as a matter of conscience, "would never purchase meat" that had been on a pagan altar, and Paul's ruling that "with respect to food and drink, nothing is unclean of itself." Yet "To act against conscience is neither right nor safe," so "Be careful of the weakness of your brother in his scrupulosity"; "you do not parade your freedom in the face of your weaker brother." He is just as firm the other way: "I am not to use my liberty to coerce my weaker brother" — and in a 2010 conference address he warned that a weaker brother may not legislate his scruples for the whole church, "the tyranny of the weaker brother."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's exposition of these verses is brief and practical. The meat itself is no problem — "you may eat the meat if you like," because the earth is the Lord's — but when someone says it was offered to idols, the believer abstains for that man's sake. The conscience in view is the other man's, and Spurgeon states the rule plainly: "I am not to use my liberty lest I do harm to my brother." He calls Paul's principle "a safe rule with regard to Christian behaviour in many other things," and he carries it beyond meat to drink and to the example a man sets for others.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry: "A Christian must not barely consider what is lawful, but what is expedient, and for the use of edification," for "Circumstances may make that a sin which in itself is none." At the shambles they may buy without scruple: "Every creature of God is good" (1 Timothy 4:4). To accept an unbeliever's invitation is no sin — "There is a civility owing even to infidels and heathens" — and believers "should not, by needless enquiries, perplex themselves." But if anyone points out the sacrifice, refrain. The same truth cuts both ways: because the earth is the Lord's, eat freely; because the earth is the Lord's, "eat nothing that will give offence." Yet "Another man's conscience is no measure to our conduct."

V
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31–33

Do All to the Glory of God

Eating, drinking — and whatever you do

> 31 *Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* 32 *Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God;* 33 *just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, ☆ so that they may be saved.*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31–33

> *"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ."*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 11:1

εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ

EIS DOXAN THEOU · "TO THE GLORY OF GOD" · G1391

Doxa carries the Old Testament weight of *kābôd* — heaviness, worth, honor. "Whatever you do" (*eite ti poieite*) leaves no category out, and "do all" (*panta … poieite*) is a present imperative: keep doing everything toward His glory. Paul chooses the two most ordinary acts of a day, eating and drinking, so that nothing can be excluded (compare Colossians 3:17). The question that began in 8:1 as "may I?" ends as "does it honor Him?"

ἀπρόσκοποι

APROSKOPOI · "GIVE NO OFFENSE" · G677

From *a-* (not) and *proskoptō* (to strike the foot against): "without a stumbling," causing no one to trip. Only three times in the New Testament — Acts 24:16 (Paul's "blameless conscience"), here, and Philippians 1:10. Three groups are named: Jews, Greeks, and the church of God — the whole human map of Corinth. This is not the offense of the gospel itself (1:23), but needless stumbling blocks laid by our freedom.

ἀρέσκω … σωθῶσιν

ARESKŌ … SŌTHŌSIN · "PLEASE … MAY BE SAVED" · G700, G4982

"I please all men in all things" (*areskō*) is not flattery; Paul refuses that elsewhere: "if I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). It is setting aside his preferences so that nothing in him blocks another from Christ — "not seeking my own profit but the profit (*sympheron*) of the many." And it is the pattern of Christ: "For even Christ did not please Himself" (Romans 15:3). The purpose clause, *hina sōthōsin*, is the reason for the whole chapter.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik: "The purpose of our lives isn't to see how much we can get away with and still be Christians; rather, it is to glorify God." Had the Corinthians kept that in mind from the start, "how much easier it would have made everything!" An offense is "an occasion to stumble, leading someone else into sin" — not the offense legalists take at liberty, which Paul "was not shy about" giving (Galatians 5:11–12). And he closes with a diagnosis many of us need: "More often than we think, low conduct in Christian living is connected to little regard for the lost." Paul's concern was not his own profit but that many may be saved.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

Sproul's best-known short article, "What Does 'Coram Deo' Mean?" (from *In the Presence of God*, 2003), does not cite verse 31, but it argues its claim: all of life is lived before the face of God. "To divide life between the religious and the nonreligious is itself a sacrilege." "Jesus was every bit as religious when He worked in His father's carpenter shop." "To live all of life coram Deo is to live a life of integrity." His sermon on Romans 15 ("Bearing Others' Burdens," June 2007) supplies verse 33's pattern: of Christ, "Rather than pleasing Himself, His meat and drink was to please the Father," and so "We are not to seek our own pleasure to the hurt of our brothers and sisters."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's exposition gives verse 31 a sharp edge: "And if anything you might do would not glorify God, do not do it." In his note on the verses just before, he presses the same test on the example a man sets for others: "An example which is an excuse for drunkenness is not a good one." And his sermon on verse 12 ends where Paul's chapter ends — with other people's salvation — in an appeal to the unconverted to believe on Christ and be saved.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry calls verse 31 "the fundamental principle of practical godliness": "The great end of all practical religion must direct us where particular and express rules are wanting." Nothing may be done against God's glory and the good of our neighbours, so no offense is to be given to Jews, who abhor idols, to heathens, who might read our eating as homage, or to the church. "Our own humour and appetite must not determine our practice, but the honour of God and the good and edification of the church." Paul presses it by his own example, and Henry draws the lesson: "A Christian should be a man devoted to God, and of a public spirit."

VI
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From the rock at Horeb to the cup of the new covenant — where 1 Corinthians 10 reaches back and forward

> *""Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel."*
>
> EXODUS 17:6

> *"your corpses will fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me."*
>
> NUMBERS 14:29

> *"And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?"*
>
> HEBREWS 3:17

> *"For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."*
>
> ROMANS 15:4

> *"They have made Me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,"*
>
> DEUTERONOMY 32:21

> *"And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.""*
>
> LUKE 22:20

> *"Little children, guard yourselves from idols."*
>
> 1 JOHN 5:21

> *"Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."*
>
> COLOSSIANS 3:17

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik ties verse 26 to the Jewish table: Psalm 24:1 "was used as a Jewish blessing at mealtimes," and Paul says it applies to this food also — the same God owns the market and the meal.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry reads verse 10 through Numbers 14: Israel "murmured against Moses his minister," and he suspects the Corinthians were doing the same — "they murmured against Paul, and in him against Christ."

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik walks the text with its stories and its practical edge; Sproul is heard through sermons on the parallel texts in Romans and his article on living coram Deo, since he did not preach 1 Corinthians 10; Spurgeon presses the warning and the comfort on the heart; Henry gathers it into Puritan counsel. They agree on the spine of the chapter; read the Lord's Supper boxes for their different emphases.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · All — nevertheless	Israel had baptism and communion in shadow; Christ was present; "Most indeed!"	Baptism is a sign, not a guarantee — not automatically saved.	All shared the ordinances; not all were really God's people.	Judaism was Christianity under a veil; privilege without root saves no one.
II · Five sins, one promise	They could not say no; God supervises every temptation; the pass is not easy.	Do not become haughty; apostasy polluted Israel; Scripture comforts so we may hope.	Presumption counterfeits assurance; no final fall, but a foul one; no sin in being tempted.	Check desire at its first rise; distrust of self is security; no valley too dark.
III · One table	Koinonia at every table; Chairemon's invitation; the meal, not a sacrifice.	Idolatry is the most fundamental sin of the fallen heart.	Union beneath communion; a fellowship, not superstition; no delight in idols.	Guests and covenant people; communion with Christ and devils never at once.
IV · Lawful, but	Not "what's the harm?" but "what good?"; liberty within the limits of love.	Nothing unclean of itself; don't parade freedom; no tyranny of the weaker brother.	I am not to use my liberty to harm my brother — a safe rule.	Expedient, not barely lawful; civility to unbelievers; another's conscience no measure.
V · To God's glory	Not how much we can get away with; low conduct, little regard for the lost.	Coram Deo — no sacred/secular split; Christ did not please Himself.	If it would not glorify God, do not do it.	The fundamental principle of practical godliness; a public spirit.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1–33 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **"Our fathers."** Paul gives a largely Gentile church Israel's story as its own (v. 1). The warnings of the Old Testament are family history, and Henry can say, "Judaism was Christianity under a veil." THE TEXT
- **The rock was Christ.** Not "is a picture of" but "was" (v. 4). The Son of God supplied Israel in the desert; the One who fed them is the One we meet at His table. THE TEXT
- **Privilege is not protection.** "All" five times, then "nevertheless" (vv. 1–5). Sproul: baptism is a sign, and "That does not mean that because we are baptized, we are automatically saved." SPROUL
- **Sin starts as a craving.** The five sins are framed by "so that we would not crave evil things" (v. 6). Henry: "carnal appetites indulged are the root and source of much sin." HENRY
- **The confident are the vulnerable.** "Let him who thinks he stands take heed" (v. 12). Spurgeon: "The man who thinks he is strong, is off his guard." SPURGEON
- **God is faithful in every temptation.** Nothing unique (*anthrōpinos*), nothing beyond what He allows, never without *the* way out (*ekbasis*) — and the way out leads to the strength to bear it. THE GREEK

- **The way out is often the door.** "Flee from idolatry" (v. 14) follows the promise of escape at once — a present imperative: keep running. THE TEXT
- **Every sacred table is a sharing.** *Koinōnia* and *koinōnos* link the Lord's table, Israel's altar and the table of demons (vv. 16–20). Worship always goes somewhere. THE GREEK
- **Lawful is the first question, not the last.** Profitable? Edifying? Whose good (vv. 23–24)? Guzik: "liberty within the limits of love." GUZIK
- **Glory is the frame of everything.** From meat to "whatever you do" (v. 31) — and the salvation of the many (v. 33). Henry: "the fundamental principle of practical godliness." HENRY

† Questions for the Table

1 **What privileges am I counting on — my baptism, my church, my years in the faith — in place of present obedience?**

All five blessings, and "nevertheless." Privilege is not protection.

10:1-5; Heb 3:17

2 **Which of the five — craving, idolatry, immorality, testing God, grumbling — is closest to my door this month?**

Sin starts as desire before it becomes an act.

10:6-10; Jas 1:14

3 **Where am I most sure I could never fall?**

Henry: we are most likely to fall when we are most confident of our own strength.

10:12; Prov 16:18

4 **Name a temptation I thought I could handle. What was the way of escape — and did I take it?**

Common, limited, never without a way out — and the first way out is often the door (v. 14).

10:13-14

5 **What is my "temple feast" — the place, habit or screen I keep close because "it's nothing"?**

The idol is nothing; the worship is not. You cannot sit at both tables.

10:14, 19-21; 1 John 5:21

6 **What freedom will I lay down this week for someone else's good — and what ordinary thing will I do to the glory of God?**

Lawful is the first question, not the last. "Whatever you do."

10:23-24, 31-33

Paul starts this chapter in the wilderness among the graves of people who had every blessing, and he ends it at a dinner table with the glory of God. Take heed, because you can fall; take heart, because God is faithful; flee from every table but His — and then eat, drink and do whatever you do so that God is honored and your neighbor is helped toward Christ.

Teaching the Word. Living in the Light. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry died in 1714 having reached Acts; his *Commentary* on 1 Corinthians was completed after his death by Simon Browne from his notes

and method, and is cited under his name as it is published. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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